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ABSTRACT

Social studies educators must marshal all creative resources to meet the global, national, and personal challenges that face them as members of the major social studies professional organization, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Based on a continuation of current policies and lifestyles, dramatic global changes such as population explosion, malnutrition, and depleted resources, will be occurring. The challenge is to inform and provide materials for social studies students who will be the generation that can influence policymakers to redirect existing trends. The NCSS can provide speakers for conventions, write articles, hold workshops, and think creatively about how they can relate to global realities. Another challenge facing the NCSS is to actively work for a social and political environment supportive of social studies education. This could be accomplished by (1) having a volunteer network to monitor legislation and Boards of Education; (2) building links with parents, school board, business, and labor organizations and educating them to see a need of reflective inquiry in classrooms; and (3) communicating to the lay public findings from recent research in political socialization and moral development. A third challenge is to provide for more research in social studies by having the NCSS research committee and CUFA create a network of scholars. Finally, the NCSS needs to be what they are--a professional organization where creative problem solving becomes the collective style. (NE)

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How to Maintain Creativity in Social Studies: "Challenges for the Professional Organization"

by

Carole L. Hahn

SO 013 890

Presented to the College and University Faculty Assembly of NCSS, at the annual meeting, Detroit, November 20, 1981

Challenges and opportunities facing professional organizations in the eighties call for creative responses by those of us in NCSS.

The planet on which we live and about which we teach will undergo dramatic changes which pose both challenges and opportunities. The Global 2000 Report to the President tells us that in less than 20 years, if there are no changes in public policies, institutions, rates of technological advance and if there are no wars or other major disturbances, there will be intense population pressure, a greater gap between the rich and the poor nations, an increase in malnourishment, depletion of resources and further atmospheric contamination.

Where there are 4 billion people today, there will be 6.35 billion in 18 years--an increase of more than 50 percent--and 90% of that will occur in the poorest countries with the fewest resources to support their

population. By the year 2000, the existing gap between rich and poor nations will be widened much further. While the average GNP in North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan will be about $11,000 per year, in the most populous nations it will remain at $200 per year.

While food production is expected to rise, most of the gains will be consumed by the countries with the highest food consumption now. The World Bank predicts that unless steps are taken, the number of malnourished people in the Less Developed Nations could rise from 500 million in the 1970's to 1.3 billion by 2000.

Arable land, petroleum, non-fuel minerals, water supplies, and wood will be drastically diminished. Forty percent of the forest in less developed nations where wood is the primary source of fuel will be gone. In turn that will increase soil erosion, desertification, salinization, and atmospheric pollution. The quality of

the atmosphere will be further destroyed by pesticides, acid rain, increases in carbon dioxide and decreases in ozone resulting in more skin cancer from ultraviolet light.

And while all of this is happening to our physical environment, prices will continue to rise in real terms--over and above inflation. As demand increases for increasingly scarce supplies of food, energy, forest products and clean water, personal incomes can no longer be spent on the luxury goods.

These predictions (which incidentally are not the most pessimistic ones) are based on the continuation of current policies, and lifestyles. That is the challenge for our professional organization.

We have the opportunity to inform our members, and to provide them with the materials they can use to inform their students immediately. Those students who are sitting in social studies classes today can become the generation

which influences policy makers to redirect existing trends. They can--if we will show them the way.

NCSS has begun to work with the World Bank to provide speakers for conventions, articles for Social Education, and workshops for teachers on teaching for alternative global futures. That is a beginning, but we must think of far more that we can do while attending to things like publications, conventions, committee assignments and budgets. We must not forget the wider picture. We must constantly think creatively about how we can relate to global realities.

National trends as well as global ones affect the environment in which our professional organization operates. From every side we see indications of the dismanteling of the heart of citizenship education--reflective inquiry and an appreciation of democratic principles:

For example, state testing programs measure students reading and computation abilities. As a result, we see

students engaged in more drill and rote learning, and in less problem-solving and value analysis than ever before.

Proposals in Congress to revive the House UnAmerican Activities Committees, textbook adoption committees' rejection of books dealing with controversial issues, and local administrators telling teachers not to discuss values in the classroom--all these present the threat to students' freedom to learn and teachers freedom to teach.

Mandates to teach "creationism" in anthropology and world history courses as well as in biology--and politicians' advocating school prayers--make a mockery of our efforts to instill an appreciation for democratic principles.

The challenge to the professional organization is to actively work for a social and political environment which is supportive of social studies education.

At the state and national level, we must build a volunteer network that monitors pending legislation and Board of Education discussions and which alerts our members when letters, telegrams and phone calls are needed.

We must build links with parent, school board, business and labor organizations. We must continually educate them to the vital need for reflective inquiry in classrooms if we want democracy to survive. We must communicate to the lay public findings from recent research in political socialization and moral development.

We are also faced with challenges as we realize the need for more research in social studies, when we have no social studies R & D centers and at a time when federal dollars to fund research has almost dried up. The NCSS research committee and CUFA can creatively respond by creating a network of scholars whose research complements one another's, and which addresses areas of greatest need.

And finally, as a professional organization, we must realize that our members are pressed by rising prices, threatened by "reductions in force," demoralized by constant public attacks on the schools and disillusioned as they seem further than ever from realising the ideals which led them into this profession in the beginning.

Members want services without dues increases, intellectual stimulation and assurance that what they are doing is valued - The challenge is that We are the professional organization. In our committees and in our conference sessions, in our "face - to - face" and "through - the - mail" contacts with colleagues, we must continually identify the problems, brainstorm possible alternatives, anticipate likely consequences and make careful judgments. We must apply to our shared dilemnas the processes we teach. Creative problem solving must become our collective style.

The 12,000 of us members and the perhaps one thousand of us who take turns leading, must marshal all of our creative resources to meet the global, national, and personal challenges which face us as the social studies professional organization.